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Writings of John Quincy Adams. Edited by WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD. Volume IV., 1811-1813. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1914. Pp. xxv, 541.)

WITH each new volume of the *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, the scope of this important collection of documents becomes clearer and more impressive. A somewhat minute comparison of this fourth volume with the corresponding volume of the *Memoirs* yields convincing proof that the editor has carefully avoided duplication. The formal despatches and even the intimate letters which Adams penned at St. Petersburg in the years 1811, 1812, and 1813, not only add to the detailed records of the diary, but contribute materially to an understanding of the social as well as the political world in which he moved. Adams never allowed himself to record a careless or inaccurate observation in his journal, but he not infrequently omitted, or merely alluded to items of political interest. His formal despatches, on the contrary, are models of punctilious statement. Not a fact or impression which could serve the purposes of his government was suffered to escape. It is not until late in April, 1811, for example, that the *Memoirs* contain any intimation of the approaching rupture between Russia and France; but the despatches to the Secretary of State describe many "symptoms of political alienation" as early as February of that year.

Beside the despatches, which occupy nearly one-half of the volume, there are many lengthy epistles—*letters* seems too slight a word to apply to Adams's correspondence. In writing to members of his family, he relaxed his official austerity somewhat, but he never became spontaneous. Even to his son, for whom he had a deep affection, he wrote in a stilted style which seems addressed quite as much to posterity. On September 1, 1811, he recorded in his diary: "I began this morning the first of a series of letters which I intend to write to my son George upon subjects of serious import." At the close of the first of these letters, he wrote, "I shall number separately these letters that I mean to write you on the subject of the Bible. And as, after they are finished, I shall perhaps ask you to read them all together or to look over them again myself, you must keep them on a separate file. I wish that hereafter they may be useful to your brothers and sister as well as to you."

It was a strange diplomatic world in which Adams moved at St. Petersburg. Few Americans of his day could have played a part in it with his dignity and independence; and even he succumbed at times to the un-American fashions about him. Describing a dinner at the French ambassador's, he wrote, without the slightest approach to humor,

As my style here is altogether republican, I went only in a chariot and four, attended by two footmen in livery, and driven by a coachman on the carriage box, and a postillion, between boy and man, on the right side horse of the leading pair. My own footmen followed me about

half the way up the stairs, when I threw off and gave them my *shoop*, a large outside fur garment, fit only for wearing in a carriage.

The picture hardly harmonizes with traditional republican simplicity.

Special interest attaches to the despatches in which Adams describes the relation of Russia to the Continental System of Napoleon. The impossibility of a rigid regulation of trade and the community of interests which were drawing Russia and England together, are pointed out in the incisive way of which Adams was master. In a despatch to Secretary James Monroe dated October 16, 1811, there is an illuminating passage (written in cypher in the original) which is worth quoting in full, for the light that it sheds on Russian-American relations.

The Russian commerce of exportation [wrote Adams] is an object of such importance not only to the nation but to the crown and to the nobility who compose the imperial councils and command in the armies that they can never consent to sacrifice it, nor would the sovereign himself, perhaps, be secure upon his throne, should he arrest entirely the circulation which feeds the source of his own revenues and of the private fortunes of all the principal nobility. But Great Britain and the United States are the only markets for this exportation still open, and so long as the peace between them continues, the ships and vessels of the United States provide the means of carriage to England as well as to America. Should, however, the war break out, the exportation to both would become much more difficult. The English being masters of the Baltic would probably not permit the American flag to appear upon it, no neutral vehicle of commerce would be left, and Russia would be reduced to the alternative of sacrificing all her export trade, or of permitting it to be carried by English vessels. The first is obviously the present purpose of France; but I have suggested the causes which render compliance with it here impracticable. The second cannot be done without an avowed and formal peace with England, or at least without precipitating a war with France, which Russia is equally desirous of avoiding. It is this view of things which makes Russia take so much interest in our peace with England; nor is it one of the motives upon which France is so anxious to procure the war. The same view appears to me not less important to the United States themselves, whose policy, if I may be permitted to express an opinion, coincides entirely with that of Russia.

When the belated news of the declaration of war by the United States reached Adams, late in the year 1812, he could see but one great issue involved. "The war hangs upon a single point; and that is *impressment*." And six months later he was of the same mind: impressment was neither more nor less than the crime of "manstealing". "The principle for which we are now struggling is of a higher and more sacred nature than any question about mere taxation can involve. It is the principle of personal liberty and of every social right."

Items of biographical interest abound in this volume. The motives and circumstances which impelled Adams to decline an appointment to

the Supreme Court of the United States, are set forth in his serious way in letters to President Madison and to John Adams. A choice letter, written in Adams's best vein, describes an interview with Madame de Staël. He entered the salon just as the brilliant Frenchwoman was haranguing Lord Cathcart on the glories of the British nation. "To which his Lordship added that their glory was in being a *Moral Nation*, a character which he was sure they would always preserve." "If my mind had been sufficiently at ease to relish anything in the nature of an exhibition", comments Adams grimly, "I should have been much amused at hearing a French woman's celebration of the English for generosity toward other nations, and a lecture upon national morality from the commander of the expedition to Copenhagen."

Long residence abroad did not abate Adams's intense nationalism. On the contrary, it seemed only to emancipate him from the narrow provincialism of his section. He had small patience with the attitude of men like Josiah Quincy who were opposing the admission of Louisiana as a state. That question, to Adams's mind, was settled eight years before. "I love my native land, as much as Mr. Quincy", he wrote, "and I feel an attachment of sentiment to the very spot of my birth which will quit me only with my life. But I could take by the hand as a fellow-citizen a man born on the banks of the Red River or the missouri with just the same cordiality, that I could at least half a million of natives of Massachusetts." One more quotation will suffice to attest Adams's statesmanlike breadth of vision at this time. "I am not displeased to hear that Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Louisiana are rapidly peopling with Yankees", he wrote in 1813. "I consider them as an excellent race of people, and as far as I am able to judge I believe that their moral and political character far from degenerating improves by emigration. I have always felt on that account a sort of predilection for those rising western states. . . . There is not upon this globe of earth a spectacle exhibited by man so interesting to my mind or so consolatory to my heart as this metamorphosis of howling deserts into cultivated fields and populous villages which is yearly, daily, hourly, going on by the hands chiefly of New England men in our western states and territories. If New England loses her influence in the councils of the Union it will not be owing to any diminuation of her population occasioned by these emigrations; it will be from the partial, sectarian, or as Hamilton called it *clannish*, spirit which makes so many of her political leaders jealous and envious of the west and of the south."

ALLEN JOHNSON.